

SEDER HA'AVODAH

Lyrics and music by ISHAY RIBO



BACKGROUND

Ishay Ribo was born in France, and moved with his family to Israel when he was eight years old. After a while the family became more Orthodox, and moved to a Haredi neighborhood in Jerusalem. Ribo served in the Army unit for Haredi boys, and began performing and working on his first album while still serving. After the army he married, and began studying at Midreshet Ziv - a Kollel (yeshiva for married men) for musicians that had opened in 2013. His first and second albums were warmly received in the religious community, but it would be fair to say that it was not until 2017 that he began to break through beyond the religious, and into the general public. In 2018 his album "Grey Area", containing several hits such as the song "Come Home", and "[One and Forever](#)" went platinum. His fame and success has not led to a generalizing of Ribo's message. His work has become even deeper entwined with religious faith and text. Recently he released a song that addresses the Coronavirus in religious terms, translating "[Corona](#)" as the divine Crown.

Seder Ha'Avodah - Order of the Service was the first single from his 2019 album entirely dedicated to the spiritually contemplative month of Ellul, and was released to time with the month of Ellul in 2019. This song, and its commercial success in Israel, is quite the cultural landmark. It was played throughout the month of Ellul on all major radio stations. The song takes the listener on a musical/spiritual journey through the sacrificial ritual of the High Priest in the Temple on Yom Kippur. The vast majority of the text is taken almost word-for-word from accounts of the ritual found in the Yom Kippur synagogue service, and/or its description in Talmud Yoma. Its genius is in the musical expression of the events described, and in the elements that Ribo himself introduces into the description.



He entered the place he entered¹
and stood in the place he stood,
washed his hands and feet,
immersed, came up and dried himself.

He came from the place he came
and went to the place he went,
stripped off his weekday clothes
and donned white garments.²

And thus he would say: "O Lord!
Grant atonement for the sins, transgressions and iniquities
which I sinned before you - I and my household."³

And if one could recall
the flaws, the deficiencies,
all the sins and transgressions⁴
surely he would count thus:

One, one and one, one and two, one and three,
one and four, one and five...⁵
Straight away he would despair, unable to bear
the bitter taste of sin,
the shame, the missed opportunity, the loss.

And the priests and the People standing in the courtyard,
when they heard the explicit Name of G!d
come out from the mouth of the High Priest,
would bow and prostrate themselves, falling on their face
"Blessed be the name of the glory of his kingdom for ever
and ever!"⁶

He stepped to the place where he had stepped, his face
toward the sacred and his back to the Temple -

without stain, his mouth and actions at one.

*Nichnas l'makom shenichnas
v'amad bamakom she'amad.
Rachatz Yadav raglav
taval alah v'nistapag*

*Ba mimakom shehu ba
v'halach l'makom shehalach
Pashat bigdey hachol
lavash bigdey lavan*

*V'chach haya omer: Ana hashem,
kaper lachata'im l'avonot v'lapsha'im
shechatati lefanech ani ubeyti
V'im adam haya yachol lizkor
et hap'gamim et hachisronot
et kol hapsha'im et kol ha'avonot
betach kach haya moneh:
achat, achat v'achat achat ushtayim achat v'shalosh
achat v'arba achat v'chamesh
Yashar haya mitya'esh ki lo yachol haya laset
et ta'am m'rirut hachet
et habusha et hafisfus et hahafsed*

*V'hacohanim v'ha'am ha'omdim ba'azara
kshehayu shom'im et shem hashem hameforash
yotzeh mipi cohen gadol
hayu kor'im mishtachavim v'noflim al pneyhem
Baruch shem k'vot malchuto l'olam va'ed*

*Pasa l'makom shepasa,
panav lakodesh achorav laheichal*

Lelo r'vav hayu shavim piv uma'asav

נִכְנַס לְמָקוֹם שֶׁנִּכְנַס
וְעָמַד בְּמָקוֹם שֶׁעָמַד
רָחַץ יָדָיו רַגְלָיו
טָבַל עָלָה וְנִסְתַּפַּג

בָּא מִמָּקוֹם שֶׁהוּא בָּא
וְהָלַךְ לְמָקוֹם שֶׁהָלַךְ
פָּשַׁט בְּגָדֵי הַחֹל
לָבַשׁ בְּגָדֵי לָבָן

וְכֵן הָיָה אוֹמֵר אָנָּה ה'
כִּפֹּר לְחַטָּאִים לְעוֹנוֹת וּלְפִשְׁעִים
שֶׁחָטָאתִי לְפָנֶיךָ אֲנִי וּבֵיתִי
וְאִם אָדָם יָכוֹל לִזְכֹּר
אֶת הַפְּגָמִים אֶת הַחֲסָרוֹת
אֶת כָּל הַפִּשְׁעִים אֶת כָּל הָעוֹנוֹת
בְּטַח כֹּף הָיָה מוֹנֵה,
אֶחָת, אֶחָת וְאַחַת אֶחָת וּשְׁתַּיִם אֶחָת וְשָׁלֹשׁ
אֶחָת וְאַרְבַּע אֶחָת וְחֲמֵשׁ
יָשָׁר הָיָה מִתְיַאֵשׁ כִּי לֹא יָכוֹל הָיָה לְשַׂאת
אֶת טַעַם מְרִירוֹת הַחֶטָּא
אֶת הַבוּשָׁה אֶת הַפִּסְפוּס אֶת הַהִפְסָד

וְהַכֹּהֲנִים וְהָעָם הָעוֹמְדִים בְּעֶזְרָה
כְּשֶׁהָיוּ שׁוֹמְעִים אֶת שֵׁם ה' הַמְּפָרָשׁ
יֹצֵא מִפִּי כֹהֵן גָּדוֹל
הָיוּ כּוֹרְעִים מְשַׁתְּחוּיִם וְנוֹפְלִים עַל פְּנֵיהֶם
בְּרוּךְ שֵׁם כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתוֹ לְעֹלָם וָעֶד

פָּסַע לְמָקוֹם שֶׁפָּסַע
פָּנָיו לְקֹדֶשׁ אַחֲרָיו לְהִיכָל

לֹא רָבַב הָיוּ שָׂוִים פִּיו וּמַעֲשָׂיו



He came from the place he came
and went to the place where he went,
stripping off his white garments and donning clothes of gold.⁷

And thus he would say:
"O Lord! Grant atonement for the sins, the transgressions and
inequities
which I have sinned before you – I and my household."
And if one could recall
all the loving kindness, the goodness,
all the compassion and salvation,

surely he would count thus:
"One, one and one, one and two,
one of a thousand, thousands of thousands and myriad myriads
of wonderous miracles you have done for us day and night."⁸

Then the priests and the People standing in the courtyard,
when they heard the name, the explicit Name
come out from the mouth of the High Priest,
would bow and prostrate themselves, falling on their face:
'Blessed be the name of the glory of his kingdom for ever and
ever!'

He left the place he had left and trembled in the place where he
stood.
Stripped off his golden garments and donned his own clothes
(the clothes of himself?)
And all of the People and the priests escorted him home.

It was a holiday for all who loved him, because he had attained
forgiveness for all the assembly of Israel.⁹

Happy is the People for whom it is so!

*Ba l'makom shehu ba
v'halach l'makom shehalach.
Pashat bigdei lavan lavash bigdei zahav*

*V'chach haya omer:
Ana hashem, kaper lachata'im l'avonot v'lapsha'im
shechatati lefanech ani ubeyti
V'im adam haya yachol lizkor
et hachasadim et hatovot et kil harachamim
et kol hayeshu'ot,*

*betach kach haya moneh:
achat, achat v'achat achat ushtayim
achat me'elef alfey alafim v'rov ribai r'vavot
nisim nifla'ot sha'asita imanu yamim v'leylot.*

*V'hacohanim v'ha'am ha'omdim ba'azara kshehayu
shom'im et shem hashem hameforash
yotzeh mipi cohen gadol
hayu kor'im mishtachavim v'noflim al pneyhem
Baruch shem k'vot malchuto l'olam va'ed*

*Yatza mimakom sheyatza v'ra'ad bamakom she'amad.
Pashat bigdei zahav lavash bigdei atzmo.
V'chol ha'am v'hacohanim hayu m'lavim oto l'veyto*

V'yom tov l'ohavav ki nislach lechol adat yisra'el

Ashrei ha'am shekacha lo

בָּא מִמְקוֹם שֶׁהוּא בָּא
וְהָלַךְ לְמִקְוֹם שֶׁהָלַךְ
פָּשַׁט בְּגָדֵי לְבָן לְבָשׁ בְּגָדֵי זָהָב

וְכַךְ הָיָה אוֹמֵר
אָנָּה ה' כִּפֵּר לַחַטָּאִים לְעוֹנוֹת וּלְפִשְׁעֵים
שֶׁחָטָאתִי לְפָנֶיךָ אֲנִי וּבֵיתִי
וְאִם אָדָם יִכּוֹל לִזְכֹּר
אֶת הַחַסְדִּים אֶת הַטוֹבוֹת
אֶת כָּל הַרַחֲמִים אֶת כָּל הַיְשׁוּעוֹת

בְּטַח כַּךְ הָיָה מוֹנֵה,
אֶחָת, אֶחָת וְאֶחָת אֶחָת וּשְׁתַּיִם
אֶחָת מֵאַלְף אֶלְפֵי אֶלְפִים וְרֹב רַבֵּי רַבּוֹת
נִסִּים וּנְפִלְאוֹת שֶׁעָשִׂיתָ עִמָּנוּ יָמִים וְלַיְלֹת

וְהִכְהִנִים וְהָעַם הָעוֹמְדִים בְּעֶזְרָה
כְּשֶׁהָיוּ שׁוֹמְעִים אֶת שֵׁם הַשֵּׁם הַמְפֹרָשׁ
יֹצֵא מִפִּי כָהֵן גָּדוֹל
הָיוּ כּוֹרְעִים מִשְׁתַּחֲוִים וְנוֹפְלִים עַל פְּנֵיהֶם
בְּרוּךְ שֵׁם כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתוֹ לְעֹלָם וָעֶד

יָצָא מִמְקוֹם שֶׁיָצָא וְרָעַד בְּמִקְוֹם שֶׁעָמַד
פָּשַׁט בְּגָדֵי זָהָב לְבָשׁ בְּגָדֵי עֲצָמוֹ
וְכֹל הָעָם וְהִכְהִנִים הָיוּ מְלֹאִים אוֹתוֹ לְבֵיתוֹ

וַיּוֹם טוֹב לְאוֹהֲבָיו כִּי נִסְלַח לְכָל עַדְתּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל

אֲשֶׁרֵי הָעָם שֶׁכָּכָה לוֹ



4-5. ואם אדם היה יכול לזכור את הפגמים את
הקסרונות את כל הפשעים את כל העוונות
בטח כך היה מונה, אחת, אחת ואחת אחת ושתיים
ושלש אחת וארבע אחת
וקחש

All descriptions of and recollections of the Temple ritual describe the public function of the High Priest. Here Ribo imagines the internal private experience of the High Priest himself. It is a shocking exhilarating point of view for most people who will have recited this ritual description every year in synagogue, and has been praised also by Talmud teachers and students. Suddenly the High Priest, whose role is to expiate the sins and crimes of his entire nation, stops to think only of his own flaws and deficiencies. And if he, one person, whose job it is to represent the divine, is so full of sin, how much more so for every single person in the nation!

In this desperate contemplation, the High Priest sinks into despair, as Ribo transforms the specific physical motions of the Priest -- as he counts the droplets of blood from the sacrifice in a highly public display - into an emotional humble reckoning with his own flaws.

6. בָּרוּךְ שֵׁם כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתוֹ לְעֵלָם וָעַד
This is a direct quotation from the Yom Kippur service, which is in turn a direct quotation from the description of the Temple ritual in the Mishnah. It is also known as the line that Moses heard the angels sing in Heaven, and is recited silently as part of the Shema prayer.

7. פָּשַׁט בְּגָדֵי לְבוֹ לְבַשׁ בְּגָדֵי זָהָב
Here the regular priest removes his uniform and steps into the golden costume of the High Priest.

8. ואם אדם היה יכול לזכור את הקסדים את הטובות את כל הרחמים את כל
הישועות בטח כך היה מונה, אחת, אחת ואחת אחת ושתיים
אחת מאלף אלפי אלפים ורב רבי רבבות נסים ונפלאות שעשית עמנו ימים ולילות
Here Ribo conducts his virtuoso sleight of hand, both textually and religiously. Ordinarily when engaged in the ultimate act of repentance, on Yom Kippur, we confess to sins, to mistakes, and express our contrition. Yet here he swaps out the words of contrition and introduces words of praise that are usually recited on Shabbat morning and other holidays - not on Yom Kippur. Thus not only does Ribo draw on a very different part of Jewish liturgy, but he also benefits from the uplifting juxtaposition from self-abasing apology to rejoicing counting of blessings:

Though our mouths were full of song as the sea, and our tongues of exultation as the multitude of its waves, and our lips of praise as the wide-extended skies; though our eyes shone with light like the sun and the moon, and our hands were spread forth like the eagles of heaven, and our feet were swift as hinds, we should still be unable to thank thee and to bless thy name, O Lord our God and God of our fathers, for **one thousandth or myriads of myriads of the bounties** which thou has bestowed upon our fathers and upon us.

אלו בינו מלא שירה כים, ולשונונו רנה כהמון גליו, ושפתותינו שבח כמרחבי רקיע,
ועינינו מאירות כשמש וכירח, וידינו פרושות כנשרי שמים, ורגלינו קלות כאילות,
אין אנחנו מספיקים להודות לך יהוה אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו, ולברך את שמך על
אחת מאלף אלפי אלפים ורבי רבבות פעמים, הטובות שעשית עם אבותינו ועמנו



9. יום טוב לאוהביו כי נסלח לכל עדת ישראל
It was a holiday for all who loved him, because he had attained forgiveness for all the assembly of Israel.

In the original text, the people do accompany the High Priest back home, but the idea that all his loved ones rejoice is an assumption by Ribo. He also makes an interesting bridge between the personal and the national. It is a holiday for all those who loved him, while his achievement has been to attain forgiveness for the entire People of Israel. There is also a delightful positivity to this addition, since most traditions emphasize the thought that the High Priest was in mortal danger when entering the Holy of Holies, and provisions are made for pulling out his dead body. Indeed, the line in the Yom Kippur Machzor is

יום טוב היה עושה בצאתו בשלום מן הקדש -

And he would have a holiday on emerging from the Holiness in peace. Yet the reason Ribo offers for the celebration of his loved ones is not simply that he has survived! They rejoice because he has attained forgiveness for all.

10. אשרי העם...
כאהל הנמתח בדרי מעלה מראה כהן

Here Ribo adds an entire new level to our appreciation of this ritual, through the music itself. In the liturgy we read "Happy is the People..." and then later we sing of the beauty and relief of seeing the High Priest emerge from the Holy of Holies in peace. In the song,

both statements ring out together, in competitive harmony. Both the calling of the People and the visage of the High Priest - both simultaneously take center stage in Ribo's song.

AND NOW YOU

- To what extent do you expect this song to affect your experience of this part of the Yom Kippur service?
- What are your emotions on learning that such a richly innovative and deeply religious song is a commercial success in Israel?
- Is this a mark of the ultimate success of Zionism, or its failure, or something in between? Why?
- Do you find yourself more able to connect to the Priest's first "counting" of his flaws, or the High Priest's second "counting" of his blessings? What would you say is the significance of the fact that Ribo does not present only one or the other?

THEMES

- # Sin
- # Forgiveness
- # Redemption
- # Calling in vs calling out
- # Home
- # Comfort
- # The Joys of Judaism not the oys